

It's About Time . . .

Highlights from the Symposium Luncheon Address

Teleworking Executives Can Serve as Role Models

With the correct guidelines and expectations, telework situations can benefit the organization and the employee.

Executives who telework should set an example for the organization and for others who telework. The things to consider in setting an example include:

- Demonstrating that teleworking is good if it is productive.
- Clearly defining the line between work and personal life by sending and responding to emails and voice messages during work hours rather than at midnight or on the weekend so that observers will not think that working these hours is expected or is required to succeed in the business.
- Regularly providing communication regarding activities, location, and availability.

The biggest risk of teleworking is the failure to set personal boundaries.

The Speaker's Perspective is Shaped by Real-business Experience

In looking at the real-business practices of telework, the insights presented are provided from five perspectives:

1. A corporation that provides services to assist organizations in implementing and sustaining telework environments.
2. A corporation that embraces telework in its own environment.
3. An executive who manages directors who telework.
4. An executive whose manager teleworks.
5. An executive who teleworks herself.

Today's Business Environment and Economy Can Foster Telework

Telework is an increasingly important business practice in today's business environment, which:

- has the lowest sustained inflation of 40 years;
- has the lowest unemployment since 1973;
- has the longest peacetime expansion in the 20th century;
- is experiencing a widening income gap;
- has an adult population in which 50% have a high school diploma or less;
- has a new economy that is knowledge/skills-*biased*; and
- by 2004 will have 4 million unfilled jobs, 3 million of which will require a college education.

Organizations Can Use Telework as a Tool for Enhancing Workforce Satisfaction

Organizations are implementing new and innovative ways to attract and retain employees in this critical war for workers. The workforce is changing in the following ways:

- More people work full-time and put in longer hours, averaging 46 hours per week, up 260 hours per year over the 1989 level.
- Nearly 48 minutes per day is spent commuting.
- There is less time for personal life.
- Sixty-four percent of all married couples with children have dual careers, compared to 39% in 1970.
- Both partners work full-time in 75% of dual-earner households.

Organizations need to provide flexibility in light of the changing demographics of the workforce. When recruiting and retaining employees, the following factors should be considered:

- Forty-five percent of today's students say a top consideration for the first employer is the ability to balance work with life outside of the job.
- The estimated cost to replace an employee is 75 to 150% of total compensation.
- Corporate America spends \$4.9 billion each year due to employees who resign.

Family-friendly policies can increase employee loyalty, as evidenced by the following:

- Eighty-seven percent of employees are willing to work harder for a company with work/life programs (Roper Poll).

- The more employees use family support benefits, the more they exhibit initiative, teamwork, and flexibility (University of Chicago).
- Eighty-six percent of people surveyed agreed with the following statement: “A company cannot remain competitive in the 1990s without addressing . . . balance between . . . work and personal life” (Mercer Work/Life and Diversity Benchmarking Initiatives Survey).
- Shares of *Working Mother* magazine’s “Best 100 Companies” rose 37% in 3 years compared to 25% for Standard & Poor’s 500.
- Companies on the 1999 Fortune list of “100 Best to Work for in America” outperformed the Russell 3000 index by more than 30%.

Employers often embrace telework as one of their many benefits to attract and retain employees. For some companies, flexible work arrangements are a business strategy to retain key employees, not just a policy or rare practice. For example, Ceridian recognizes that change, adaptability, and flexibility are keys to today’s business survival and therefore embraces flexible work options as a tool that supports business goals.

Challenges Are To Be Expected

Companies face challenges in implementing telework programs, including:

- policies that work against teleworking;
- employees who do not embrace change willingly; and
- managers who have difficulty accepting the idea of respected professionals working from home part- or full-time.

One driving force of telework’s success at Ceridian was managers feeling the pain of the labor crunch. Experiencing the need to attract certain people (and not to lose others) resulted in more buy-in at the middle manager level. Also, recognizing that success breeds success, the organization gathered and publicized success stories. Finally, Ceridian offered support for managers and tools for employees in planning and implementing telework arrangements.

Author’s Advice to Organizations Considering Telework

Based on the real-life experience of an executive who manages a director who teleworks, the following advice is offered:

- Do not treat teleworkers differently from other employees; they both interact with customers and vendors who have no idea that they are not “in the office.”

- Help managers calm their fears. The typical concern is: “If I do it for one, then I have to be a bad guy when I say no to others.”
- Provide workshops and training on flexibility in the workplace.
- Focus on outcomes, not hours.
- Define the full workload in terms of results.
- Ensure that expectations on all sides are perfectly clear and written down.
- Communication is critical.
- Educate, track and measure.

By following these suggestions, an organization may gain a more focused, more efficient, more thoughtful and more loyal employee.